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CHEROKEE NATION®

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Office of the Chief

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief

Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief

January 25, 2021

Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Acting Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Matthew Duchesne
Chief, Office of Native Affairs and Policy
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Comments on *Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund Assistance* Rules as proposed in DA 21-6

Dear Chairman Pai:

On behalf of the Cherokee Nation, we are writing to express our position on the proposed *Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund Assistance* rulemaking, a program resulting from the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, to the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) as requested in DA 21-6.

The most notable request from the Cherokee Nation is to develop a process in which the tribe can automatically enroll citizens to the fund based on data acquired by the tribe when providing services to its citizens. Tribes are engaging citizens throughout this pandemic, and we would like to easily enroll these citizens during the course of enrolling them into other tribally administered, qualifying programs. Once enrolled, the citizens would then work with a participating provider delivering services in their respective area. Tribes, like the Cherokee Nation, would be required to provide a written authorization and certification that the individual qualifies and the provider can verify with the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC). This request is consistent with the government-to-government relationship and respects the tribe's ability and responsibility to address the local needs of its citizens.

Cherokee Nation is supportive of the Commission's proposal of utilizing USAC to deliver this program to tribal nations, and asks that data regarding participation throughout reservations be available to tribes for evaluating needs and services provided to their citizens.

It seems the Commission may want to develop a streamlined system for enrolling citizens who are eligible for *Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund Assistance* into the existing Lifeline program. Given, especially for tribal lands, the criteria for income-based qualifications are similar,

each participant should not have the burden of completing two applications for both services.

We are supportive of using the Lifeline's existing definition of tribal lands, so long as continues to include former reservation lands in Oklahoma. Cherokee Nation consulted with the FCC previously related to the definition of tribal lands as it pertains to the Lifeline program, which led to the inclusion of the Cherokee Outlet. The Cherokee Outlet is former reservation lands of the Cherokee Nation. We are agree with the map demonstrated on here, https://www.usac.org/wp-content/uploads/lifeline/documents/tribal/fcc_tribal_lands_map.pdf.

Cherokee Nation recommends that the Commission prioritize the use of existing Eligible Telecommunications Carriers and streamline the application for additional carriers to be designated as such. We also agree that a provider should have service that is "widely available" and has been providing internet services since April 1, 2020.

We hope the Commission will make a massive push to designate ETCs and make tribal citizens aware of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program while educating our citizens about the existing Lifeline program.

Our major concern is developing and implementing programs that are sustainable for the long-term. Long after this pandemic is gone, citizens living on tribal lands need to have access to affordable, reliable connectivity. While we know that times are challenging and programs such as this are a great benefit to our people, we should simultaneously be collaborating with the FCC and other federal agencies on expanding broadband to close the digital divide in Indian Country.

We are appreciative of the Commission, and grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on this proposed rulemaking.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact our Manager of Government Relations, Travis Noland, at travis-noland@cherokee.org or (918) 729-5392. tribal lands are

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Hoskin Jr." in a cursive style.

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Cherokee Nation Principal Chief